

# POTOMAC-GARRETT STATE FOREST ANNUAL WORK PLAN

## FISCAL YEAR 2021



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SFI-00050

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**Potomac-Garrett State Forest**  
**FY-21**  
**Annual Work Plan**



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FY-21 Annual Work Plan**

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## **I. State Forest Overview**

The Potomac-Garrett State Forests situated in southwestern Garrett County in Western Maryland have the distinction of being the birthplace of forestry conservation in Maryland. The generous donation of 1,917 acres by the Garrett Brothers in 1906 not only serves as the foundation of the Garrett State Forest, but is the root of both Maryland's present Public Lands system and Forest Service. Mountain forests, streams and valleys make up the nearly 19,000 acres of this State Forest. The forest cover is predominantly a second growth mixed hardwood forest dominated by mixed oaks, sugar and red maples, black cherry, basswood, ash and birch. The geography of this area provides for a wide range of growing conditions from the harsh, wind and ice swept ridge tops of Backbone Mountain to the deep rich slopes above the North Branch of the Potomac River. Much of the State Forest lands contain excellent quality hardwoods.

Potomac-Garrett State Forest has been intensively managed over the past nine decades. Forest harvest and grooming operations are undertaken to thin overstocked stands, to effectively deal with public safety concerns, to harvest mature, diseased/dying trees, to improve habitat for certain wildlife species, to assist and provide for certain research needs, to address aesthetic concerns and to increase the proportion of age/height diversity of forested stands.

## **II. Annual Work Plan Summary**

The FY-2021 Annual Work Plan for Potomac-Garrett State Forest was formulated in 2019. It contains projects to be undertaken in the areas of Special Projects, Maintenance and Operations, Recreation, Watershed Protection, Ecosystem Restoration / Protection, and Wildlife Management. In addition to the routine operations and management of the State Forest, the FY-21 Annual Work Plan for Potomac-Garrett State Forest details seven land management projects that will be the focus of the State Forest management staff for FY-21. All projects and proposals within this Plan have been developed to meet one or more of the Land Management Guidelines and Objectives outlined in the Potomac-Garrett State Forest Sustainable Management Plan including:

***Forest Economy:*** management activities intended to maintain an economically sustainable forest and contribute to the local economy through providing forest-related employment and products.

***Forest Conservation:*** management activities with a purpose to protect significant or unique natural communities and elements of biological diversity, including Ecologically Significant Areas, High Conservation Value Forests and old growth Forests. Old growth forest management serves to restore and/or enhance old growth forest structure and function.

***Water Quality:*** management activities designed to protect or improve ecological functions in protecting or enhancing water quality.

***Wildlife Habitat:*** management activities with a purpose to maintain and enhance the ecological needs of the diversity of wildlife species and habitat types.

***Recreation and Cultural Heritage:*** management activities with a purpose to maintain and enhance areas that serve as visual, public camping, designated trails, and other high public use areas.

#### **A. Special Management Projects Include:**

**1. Continued Development of the Certified, State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Plan** - with special focus on addressing items identified as in need of improvement as a result of the 2018 FSC/SFI Certification Audits.

**2. Forest Stand Delineation, Inventory and Monitoring** – Completion of the project to re-inventory and redefine stands on the entire forest. This critical project will continue in FY-21. To date, 100% of the forest wide data collection has been completed. The project will allow a thorough analysis of this complete data set from which further management plans will be derived. Inventory work will continue in the form of follow-up monitoring protocols associated with the initial inventory and certification requirements.

**3. Non-Native Invasive Species (NNIS) Inventory and Control Work** - The Sustainable Forest Management Plan calls for various responses to NNIS and the Forest Inventory Project has allowed for a broad view of the problem forest wide.

**4. Ecologically Significant Area (ESA) Management Plan Development** – Wildlife and Heritage staff continue to develop descriptions and management plans for the ESA areas to be included in the Potomac-Garrett State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Plan guidance document. These plans offer a look at the critical habitat elements that make up each of the designated Ecologically Sensitive Areas, and offer insights on management approaches that will assure continued protection of critical habitats, including some of the active management that has taken place to further assure protection of the rare, threatened and endangered species these areas are set up to protect.

#### **B. Land Management Projects Include:**

**1.** Continuation of the ecosystem restoration project involving control of invasive and exotic plants forest wide.

**2. 1** Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Project that involves the improvement, creation and maintenance of early successional habitat on a 7.7-acre field opening.

**3. 6** Silvicultural projects including:

2 Intermediate Harvest on 123 acres, 2 post harvest herbicide treatments on 94 acres and

3 Regeneration Harvests on 79.5 acres.

Forest harvest operations are undertaken to utilize mature and dead/dying/diseased trees; to thin overstocked stands; to improve and diversify wildlife habitat; to effectively correct public safety concerns and issues; to reduce the forests vulnerability to insect attack, disease or wildfire hazard; to facilitate certain approved research needs; to improve certain aesthetic aspects of an area; and to improve the proportions of age class and species diversity within stands and management blocks. This forest has been intensively managed since its inception, utilizing both even and uneven-aged techniques via selective removals and regeneration harvests. Early records indicate that as cut over land was acquired, foresters culled the forest, removing the poorly formed and damaged timber left behind in the wake of the cut and run practices employed by early timber speculators. By removing these undesirable trees, newly forming seedlings were released from competition and were thus cultured into the future growing stock of trees that we enjoy today. The benefits of this work have been significant including improved wildlife habitat diversity, improved forest health and more abundant mast production, improved utilization of gypsy moth damaged trees, reduced forest fire hazard, and the considerable financial contribution of management to the state and local economies as well as to those employed in the forest products industry.

The FY-21 Annual Work Plan outlines 7 silvicultural projects on 304.2 acres, producing a harvest of approximately 582,500 board feet of sawtimber and accounting for an estimated \$125,000 worth of raw wood products entering local markets. Much of the silvicultural work laid out in this work plan is focused on initiating seedling development to better ensure regeneration successes in future harvests. Much of the value of the harvests in the work plan will be directed back into the forest providing the essential investment in pre-harvest cultural work that will safeguard the long term sustainable management of these important forest resources. The cultural operations and management projects outlined within the FY-21 Annual Work Plan are selected to provide significant contributions to the sustainability of forest resources found within Potomac-Garrett State Forest and the ecosystems associated with it.

### **III. General Location Map for FY-21 Land Management Project Proposals**

**Approximately 304 Acres**

#### **Map Key**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>1. Compartment 14 Stand 12</i>      | <i>52-Acre Post-Harvest Herbicide Treatment</i>             |
| <i>2. Compartment 19 Stands 1, 4-6</i> | <i>13-Acre Conifer Salvage / 119-Acre Hardwood Thinning</i> |
| <i>3. Compartment 25 Stand 6</i>       | <i>4-Acre Conifer Thinning</i>                              |
| <i>4. Compartment 34 Stand 1</i>       | <i>42-Acre Post-Harvest Herbicide Treatment</i>             |
| <i>5. Compartment 41 Stand 5</i>       | <i>6.5-Acre Hardwood Regeneration</i>                       |
| <i>6. Compartment 45 Stand 21</i>      | <i>7.7-Acre Wildlife Enhancement Project</i>                |
| <i>7. Compartment 46 Stands 1,2</i>    | <i>60-Acre Hardwood Regeneration</i>                        |



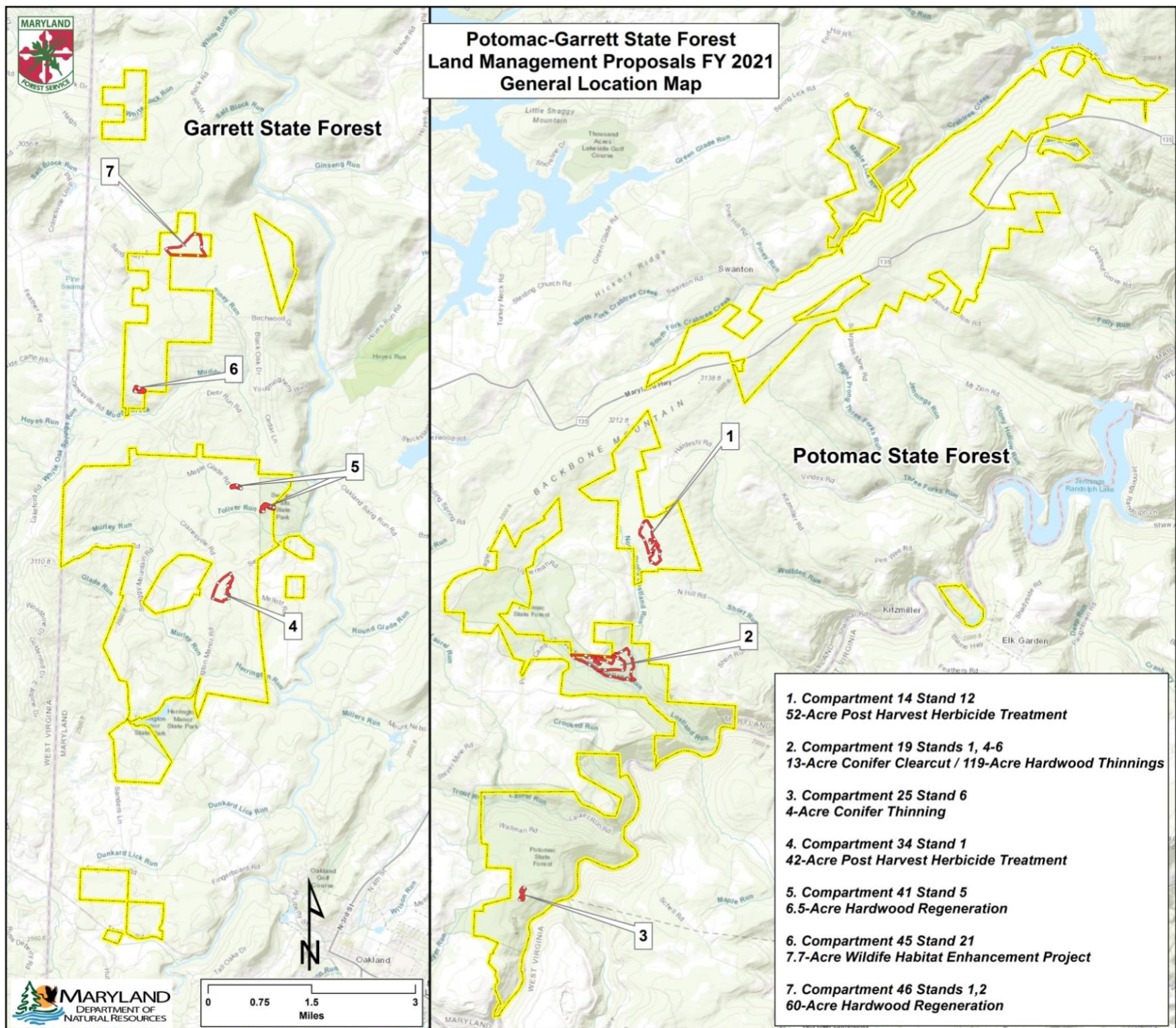


Figure 1. General location map for FY-21 land management proposals.

## **IV. Special Projects - Forest Resource Management and Planning**

### **A. Continued Development of the Certified State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Plan.**

Beginning in 2011, the Forest Service began revising the long-term sustainable management plans for all three of the State Forests in the Western Region. The initial framework follows the sustainable management plan format established for the State of Maryland's Chesapeake Forest on the Eastern shore. The Department's goal is to have the updated sustainable forest management plans receive dual third party certification under both the Forest Stewardship Councils (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiatives (SFI) standards and guidelines.

Throughout the course of the next two years, broad resource assessments were carried out identifying the various management units and features located on the forests including identification and mapping of High Conservation Value Forest Areas (HCVF), much of which was formerly identified as the State Forests "Special Management Zone". Within the HCVF are located a broad range of Ecologically Significant Areas (ESA). These areas typically contain rare, threatened or endangered species and their critical habitats. By spring of 2011 initial drafts of the Forest's Sustainable Management Plan were developed and shared with stakeholders for initial comment and review. The plans were submitted to both the FSC and SFI organizations in the spring of 2011, at which point audits had been completed on all three of the western state forests. Following the audits, draft plans and audit findings were presented to the State Forests Citizen Advisory Committees for review and comments. The Draft Sustainable Management Plans were made available for public comment fall of 2011. Revisions and updates to the Sustainable Management Plan were completed in April of 2019.

Each year the State Forests Management Program is audited for compliance to the standards set forth by the Certifying Organizations. Any shortcomings in the programs identified during the audits are identified in Corrective Action Reports (CARs) and/or observations identified as needing improvement in order to be "certified" as sustainably managed forest lands under the internationally recognized FSC and SFI standards. These corrective actions vary from simple formal documentation of routine practices, to more complex policy and procedure development involving various stakeholders and partners. The program requires that all these items be addressed before the next annual audit, with some needing more immediate attention. A minor CAR was issued by both SFI and FSC in regard to leaking equipment on a harvest site and the apparent absence of safety equipment. A corrective action plan was formulated that would add the items to the BMP checklist and confirmation of compliance would be done during each site visit by Forest Service Staff or agents. A second minor CAR was issued by FSC focused on pesticide reporting for utility right of way herbicide spraying. (See Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 for a summary of audit findings). State Forest staff time and field operations are adjusted and redirected to assist in addressing any Corrective Action items in the course of the next year.

## **B. Forest Stand Delineation, Inventory and Monitoring**

A critical part of developing long term sustainable management plans is the availability of up-to-date forest inventory data. Initial stand data collection has been completed on the harvestable areas of the forest using the SILVAH Inventory System developed by the US Forest Service which incorporates intense surveys of both the overstory and understory to assist in the formulation of appropriate silvicultural prescriptions in specific forest types. The demand for this important data set is increasingly evident as special projects evolving out of demands placed by Forest Certification Standards utilize this data set for project planning including the Annual Work Plan and the Non-Native Invasive Species Inventory. With the close of the fifth inventory season in 2016, the initial forest wide data collection has been completed on this stage of the forest monitoring program and processing of this data has been completed.

What had historically been carried out on a 10-year interval offering a snap shot in time view of the forest, has evolved into an annual sampling approach that gives a more frequent look at overall forest condition throughout the years. This approach will allow a much closer watch on developing forest conditions and allows for more rapid and timely responses. This approach is especially valuable in light of the numerous and frequent introductions of foreign insects, diseases, and invasive plants that can rapidly disrupt forest systems. The initial Stand Delineation and Inventory Project will be continued as a Forest Monitoring program as required under certification in order to allow for documented observations of changing conditions throughout the forest. Program focus will include: monitoring of developing regeneration sites allowing for the timely response to the investment in intensive silvicultural work such as herbicide control of invasive and interfering plants and prescribed fire; NNIS monitoring and control work; silvicultural results with respect to management objectives and outcomes and recreation/visitor impacts, etc.

## **V. Maintenance and Operations**

Aside from the detailed cultural work planned for the State Forests, the following is a partial list of projects that are often on-going from year to year and are an integral part of State Forest operations: Routine maintenance projects include building repair and maintenance, vehicle maintenance, mowing at the office facility, snow removal, repair and replacement of fire rings and tables at the camp sites, brush hogging trails and repair of road surfaces.

### **A. Maintenance and Management of Roads and Trails**

There are approximately 79.2 miles of trail and hardened road surface on the forest and approximately 1/3 of the mileage is maintained each year. Maintenance in these areas includes brush hogging, mowing, and rehabilitation of road surfaces. Herbicide usage has been integrated into the road maintenance regime in order to control growth in areas where mechanical control methods are not feasible (i.e. steep slopes, narrow paths, rocky areas). The use of herbicide along forest roadways can also reduce operational costs for the maintenance staff by controlling unwanted vegetation along these travel corridors for several years, when applied properly.

In FY-21 maintenance staff will concentrate on carrying out planned trail maintenance as outlined in the National Recreation Trail Grant (NRT) detailed in the Recreation Section of this plan. This will be carried out in addition to basic maintenance on the segments of multiple-use

and motorized-use trails that have been rehabilitated using National Recreation Trail Grants over the past 5 years, along with routine maintenance of the roads and trails as outlined in the roads maintenance plan.

As a result of the State Forests Certification Audit, State Forest staff has developed a formalized transportation plan in which the entire transportation infrastructure has been inventoried and assessed for management, use and maintenance needs. From this assessment, the State Forest staff develops annual maintenance plans geared toward making the roads and trails system sustainable. Information gathered for this plan is presently being used to prioritize improvements to be made with the access trails grant referenced above, NRT Grant funds, Critical Maintenance Projects, etc. As work is contracted out, plans will be updated with regard to needs. All 79.2 miles of roads and trails have been classified based on desired use and condition. A detailed breakdown of the road management classification is available upon request at the Potomac-Garrett State Forest Headquarters.

## B. Boundary Line Maintenance

Potomac-Garrett State Forest currently has 130 miles of boundary line, including interior lines, exterior lines and road frontage. Boundary maintenance is critical to the management of all public lands. In order to keep up with this effort, State Forest staff maintain approximately 30 miles of line each year. In addition to routine marking and painting, considerable effort is spent on researching, relocating, or establishing missing and/or new line, as well as addressing boundary conflicts. As conflicts arise, every effort is made to resolve the issue in a timely and professional manner. Often, this work leads to the need for a licensed surveyor and legal recourse in order to resolve the issue. With the assistance of Land Planning and Acquisition staff, all previously unpainted and/or missing boundary lines are to be reestablished until the entire forest boundary is demarcated.

## C. Campground Operation and Maintenance

Potomac-Garrett State Forest offers year round, primitive camping in five separate areas of the State Forest; Lostland Run, Laurel Run/Wallman, Snaggy Mountain and Piney Mountain. Within each area is a group site, a rustic trail shelter and several primitive campsites offering a picnic table, lantern post and fire ring. Vault toilets have been installed in each of the five areas to improve sanitary conditions for campers and forest visitors. Campsites and trail shelters are available on a first-come, first-served basis. A self-registration kiosk is available at the entrance to each area.

Major campsite maintenance coincides with major holidays, the end of winter and at the traditional end of the camping season in late summer/early fall. The campsites are also frequented during the white-tailed deer firearms seasons in the fall and winter, during spring turkey season in early spring and during the opening weekend of trout season in late winter/early spring. Maintenance and operation of these primitive campsites includes: managing group site reservations; maintenance of information / bulletin boards; camper contacts to insure policies are understood; self-registration fee collections and deposits; weekly site inspection and cleaning; hazardous tree evaluation and removals; grass mowing (typically the week before the summer holidays and otherwise as needed); maintenance and replacement of picnic tables, lantern posts, and fire rings; and site impact monitoring.



## D. 3-D Archery Range Maintenance and Management

Potomac-Garrett State Forest offers the only 3-D Archery Range in Maryland's Public Lands System. Maintenance and operation of this facility includes: promotion of the facility; maintenance of information / bulletin boards; weekly inspection and cleaning; periodic maintenance and replacement of targets; hazardous tree evaluation and removals; brush removal as needed; site impact monitoring, annual overhaul and patching of targets; seasonal set up and take down for the off season.

The archery range, located behind the state forest headquarters, is open daily from dawn to dusk and offers a 30-target course, with four separate skill levels at each target. Rules and regulations are posted at the range and a \$7.00 fee is required before shooting.

## E. Interpretation and Education

With limited staffing resources, interpretive efforts have been focused on Sustainable Forest Management Programs for targeted audiences using the interpretive features at the Kindness Demonstration Area located off Fingerboard Road in Compartments 43 and 44. Primary audiences have included leaders in the fields of agricultural and natural resources, extension service personnel, forestry board members, forest land owners and forest land managers. The facility is set up as a self-guided lesson in forestry and wildlife management practices and is available to groups and individuals wishing to learn more about sustainably managing forests.

## VI. Recreation

### A. Recreation Opportunities (See Figures 2-4 p. 12-14)

#### 1. Hiking and Biking Trails

Potomac-Garrett State Forest has over 80 miles of trails open to hikers, mountain bikers and horseback riders of any ability. Not all trails are open to all recreational pursuits and it is recommended that before engaging in any activities patrons should visit or contact the state forest headquarters to become aware of any trail restrictions. A backpacking permit must be obtained at the forest headquarters or at any of the self-registration areas. Trail guides featuring a topographic map and trail descriptions can be purchased at the forest headquarters.

#### 2. Off Road Vehicles

A variety of off road vehicle types are permitted on trail sections that are blazed green. These areas include Snaggy Mountain Road, Burkholder Road and Wallman Road. Riders should consult ORV maps and regulations for each state forest. Riders are required to obtain an annual registration and current Department of Natural Resources ORV permit, available online at [www.dnr.maryland.gov](http://www.dnr.maryland.gov).

#### 3. Hunting

Hunting is permitted throughout the forest except where posted with safety zone signs. The

19,000 acres of Potomac-Garrett State Forest includes two state park areas (Herrington Manor and Swallow Falls) where hunting is prohibited. The forest boundaries are marked with yellow paint on trees - a yellow bar as you enter the forest and a yellow dot as you exit the forest. Hunting on or crossing private land within or near the State Forest requires the written permission of the land owner. Parking is permitted along roadways as long as traffic is not blocked. Hunters must have a valid Maryland Hunting License and should refer to the current Hunting & Trapping guide for season dates and specific regulations.

Several access roads are opened every fall to accommodate hunters. These gated roads are opened prior to squirrel season in September and remain open through January 31. Opened roads can be used by all hunters and allow for vehicular traffic. Due to the nature of these roads, the use of four-wheel drive is recommended. Disabled hunter access roads are also available. Brochures are available with more details concerning the disabled hunter accessible roads and their locations.

Hunter Safety Classes, required for the purchase of a license, are taught periodically through the Department of Natural Resources. These classes are usually offered in the county at one of the local State Parks.

#### 4. Trapping

Trapping is permitted both on land and in the water. A permit can be issued for trapping on Potomac-Garrett State Forest at the Regional DNR Wildlife Office in Flintstone. Trappers are required to obtain a certificate of trapper education from the Department of Natural Resources. Trapper education courses are held statewide. Refer to the current Hunting & Trapping Guide for complete regulations. A valid hunting license is required when applying for a trapping permit.

#### 5. Fishing

Anglers with a Freshwater Fishing License have the opportunity to catch multiple species of fish in the Potomac River including smallmouth bass, rock bass and several trout species. As part of the DNR trout management program, early spring through fall stocking provides excellent fishing. A variety of opportunities for wild brook trout and stocked brown and rainbow trout exist in other designated areas, including Lostland Run and Laurel Run. When fishing, be prepared to negotiate strong currents, large boulders and fallen trees in the water. Fishing is also available at the nearby Jennings Randolph Lake, which is downstream on the Potomac River. A boat ramp is located on the Maryland side accessible from Mt. Zion Road off MD Route 135. For regulations, creel limits and special management areas consult the Maryland Freshwater Sportfishing Guide or contact the Western Maryland Fisheries Office at (301) 334-8218.

#### 6. Winter Recreation

Cross-country skiers and snowshoers of all abilities can enjoy a winter wonderland across Potomac-Garrett State Forest. The red and blue trails on the South Snaggy Complex are recommended for a backcountry snowshoe experience. Snowshoers must be careful to walk beside and not on cross-country tracks as it disrupts them.

#### 7. Geocaching

Currently, 8 geocaches are located throughout Potomac-Garrett State Forest for those interested in testing their navigational and tracking skills. All geocaches must be reviewed and approved by the staff before being placed anywhere on the forest. Applications and general rules for geocache placement are available at the state forest headquarters.

#### 8. Maps

Brochures and maps are available at the Potomac-Garrett State Forest Headquarters Office located at 1431 Potomac Camp Road, Oakland, Maryland 21550.